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**Bush Administration Sends Vietnam Trade Agreement to Congress**  
*Agreement Designed to Foster Economic Reforms & Openness in Vietnam*

WASHINGTON - The Bush Administration today sent to the Congress the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral trade agreement (BTA), with U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick calling it "an important step forward in bringing economic freedom and opportunity to Vietnam, along with providing new trade opportunities for American workers, consumers and businesses."

Signed in July 2000, the U.S-Vietnam BTA is one of the initiatives in President Bush's 2001 Legislative Trade Agenda, and is broadly supported by a bipartisan coalition of Congressional leaders, particularly Vietnam veterans such as Senators John McCain, John Kerry and Chuck Hagel. House Members supportive of the agreement include Congressmen William M. Thomas, Philip Crane, and Lane Evans.

"The U.S.-Vietnam BTA is about opening up Vietnam to greater economic reform, and greater openness in general," said Ambassador Zoellick. "By lowering tariffs and trade barriers, particularly in the services sector, this trade agreement will provide Americans with expanded access to the Vietnamese market, and includes important protections for American intellectual property rights holders."

Implementation of the comprehensive agreement will help move Vietnam toward a rules-based, global market system. Ambassador Zoellick noted that while the agreement is a positive development, Vietnam must continue the process of internal reforms necessary to improve economic and societal conditions. When implemented, the U.S.-Vietnam BTA will extend normal trade relations (NTR) to Vietnam (subject to an annual Jackson-Vanik waiver by the President) and help lower Vietnamese tariffs on hundreds of categories of U.S. goods and farm products. Under the 1974 Trade Act, the agreement will be handled in an expedited Congressional procedure which stipulates a maximum of 45 legislative days in committee and 15 days in the full houses of Congress, at which time a vote must be taken. No amendments are allowed.

Ambassador Zoellick attended the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings in Shanghai, China this week, to discuss trade matters among the 21 member economies, including with his Vietnamese counterpart.

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